



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Healthy Hearing*

Noise-Induced Hearing Loss Among Adults — United States, 2011-2012

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*[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Latetia Moore] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Dr. Latetia Moore, filling in for your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

If your spouse or friend isn't listening, they aren't necessarily ignoring you. It might be that they don't hear you. Nearly one in four adults who think they have good hearing, might have hearing loss.

John Eichwald is an audiologist with CDC's National Center for Environmental Health. He's joining us today to discuss hearing loss and ways to prevent it. Welcome to the show, John.

[John Eichwald] Thank you

[Dr. Latetia Moore] John, how many people in the U.S. have hearing loss caused by loud noise?

[John Eichwald] One in six adults report some degree of trouble hearing and that's about as much as reported for diabetes and cancer, combined. When we look at actual hearing tests, one in four adults have damage to their ears that appears to be caused by exposure to loud noise. This type of damage is often permanent and usually preventable.

[Dr. Latetia Moore] Is it more common among any particular sex or age group?

[John Eichwald] The total number of people with hearing loss increases with age. Almost 20 percent of young adults in their 20's have damage from noise exposure and this increases to over 25 percent for adults in their 50's. Men are more likely to have damage from noise exposure.

[Dr. Latetia Moore] What are some symptoms of hearing problems?

[John Eichwald] Most damage to hearing from noise progresses slowly and is often not noticed until later in life. This type of hearing loss makes it difficult to hear high pitched sounds; for example, birds singing or the rustling of leaves. You may first notice a problem understanding speech in difficult listening situations, like a noisy restaurant, or that sounds are muffled, like listening through a wall or with cotton in your ears. Most hearing loss impairs the understanding of certain speech sounds, like the "f" in the word "fin" and the "th" as in the word "thin." Many people with noise induced hearing loss say they can hear but they complain they can't understand what people are saying. Other signs that suggest damage to hearing include tinnitus, which sounds like a ringing, buzzing, hissing, or clicking in your ears.

[Dr. Latetia Moore] What are the leading causes of hearing damage?

[John Eichwald] Hearing loss has many causes, including genetics, diseases, infections, aging, and loud noise exposure. Most adults with hearing loss have a combination of age-related noise induced hearing loss. Telling the difference between those two can be very hard. Many people with damage to their hearing from loud noise reported that they did not have noisy jobs.

[Dr. Latetia Moore] How can people protect themselves from hearing loss due to loud noises?

[John Eichwald] Protecting your hearing from loud sounds is relatively easy and doesn't cost that much. Everyone should avoid noisy places, whenever they can. If you know you're going to be exposed to loud sound, use products designed to reduce noise, like protective ear plugs, ear muffs, and noise cancelling headphones. At home and in the car, you can keep the volume down and take breaks from listening.

[Dr. Latetia Moore] How often should we have our hearing checked?

[John Eichwald] Health care providers play an important role in identifying hearing loss in its early stages, and should ask about exposure to loud noise or trouble hearing as part of routine care. And if you have been exposed to loud noise or you're concerned that you aren't hearing as well as you used to, talk to a health care provider about a hearing checkup.

[Dr. Latetia Moore] John, where can our listeners get more information about noise induced hearing loss?

[John Eichwald] Listeners can go to [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) and, type in the search box *environmental noise*. This website has some really cool information about how loud noise can cause hearing loss outside the workplace.

[Dr. Latetia Moore] Thanks, John. I've been talking today with John Eichwald about hearing loss and ways to prevent it.

Avoiding loud environments and using hearing protection devices can help protect and preserve hearing. Detecting hearing problems early may help prevent more damage from noise.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Latetia Moore for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.